# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Check That Switch

If I had a buck for every time a pilot has tried to take off in an SNB/JRB with his landing gear switch in the "UP" position, I believe that I could take a week off and go fishing.

However, with Congress investigating all sorts of shakedowns, I can't find a legal way to extract the dollar bills—guess I'll have to go right on reading accident reports.

From discussions with pilots who have tried this maneuver, I can assure you that it leads to plenty of trouble. As soon as they get enough speed on the take-off run to remove a little pressure from the oleo struts, the plane settles on its belly. The conversation then runs something like this:

Pilot: "Shucks!" (See note)
Co-pilot: "Shucks!" (Ditto)
Pilot: "I didn't touch it."
Co-pilot: "I didn't touch it."
Both: "Maybe it was 'UP' all the time?"

From then on they spend a considerable percentage of their time trying to figure out what to tell the Aircraft Accident Board and the local Naval Aviators Disposition Board. This is getting increasingly tough because these sharpies have heard all the excuses.

Play it safe. Check the position of the landing gear switch before you start the engines.

Editor's Note: In case you think the conversation didn't run exactly like that, neither did Gramp. There are some words that are never, never printed in respectable magazines.

## Powerful Slip Stream

A pilot who was ferrying a PBY-5A just out of overhaul writes the following account of a near accident:

"On entering the traffic pattern at NAS DALLAS, Texas, I was asked to make an extended downwind and base leg to come in behind a B-36 which was making a GCA approach. I patterned my approach so as to fall in behind the B-36 on the final with at least a mile separation.

"The B-36 continued its approach to about 150 feet above the ground, reapplied power, raised the gear and flaps, and climbed out.

"At approximately 75 feet above the ground and indicating 80 knots as I commenced my landing flare out, the B-36 slip stream hit the aircraft causing it to go into at least a 60 degree bank to the left. Full left throttle was used in the recovery and immediately another slip stream blast caused a bank of similar dimensions in the opposite direction. A wobbly recovery was effected, a go-around executed, and a normal approach and landing made."

After the incident, I talked to a VR-32 ferry pilot who had witnessed the occurrence. He related a similar incident which occurred when he was following a C-124 in for a landing."

*Grampaw Pettibone Says:*

**Allow yourself plenty of room when landing or taking-off behind one of these big babies, because they can sure get you into a lot of trouble.**

## "Uncomfortably Tight"

At an altitude of about 100 feet right after take-off the engine of the F6F pictured here suddenly quit. The pilot had started a clearing left turn and had only time to glance at the fuel pump switch and the gas selector valve. Both were positioned correctly. He made a slight right turn to line up with the remaining runway.

The F6F went through the air station boundary fence at a speed of about 70 knots. The pilot had sufficient directional control to avoid hitting a tree head-on and to miss a few cars and pedestrians as he bounced across a busy highway. Beyond the highway he slid 750 feet through a tide-water marsh land, before the wheels dug in and flipped the F6F on its back.

The pilot was dazed, but not injured, and managed to extricate himself from the cockpit unassisted. He states that he owes his life to the fact that his shoulder straps were "uncomfortably tight" when he made this particular take-off.

## A Rough One

Over El Paso, Texas on an IFR plan from Tucson, the pilot of a PV-2 refiled his flight plan to continue on to Dallas VFR. ATC approved this change and informed the pilot that he would be able to maintain VFR to Dallas.

About 10 minutes out of Abilene, the plane approached a line of thunderstorms. The pilot asked the radar operator to give a heading that would take them through the lightest spot between the storms. The plane was at an altitude of 3000 feet. Here are some statements of what happened in the next few minutes: The pilot says:

"Ten minutes out of Abilene we approached a series of thunderstorms. We had the radar operator give us a heading which would take us through the lightest spot between the thunderstorms. At this time we were at an altitude of 3,000 feet.

"We flew through a rain shower area maintaining contact and the picture ahead was about the same. Suddenly we encountered heavy rain showers accompanied by pellets of hail. This was followed immediately by heavy hail accompanied by violent turbulence. Only one instrument, the gyro-horizon, appeared to be reliable. The air speed fluctuated from 80 to 210 knots.

"The altimeter dropped to 1,750 feet indicated and went up to 3,500 feet in about the time it takes to write this sentence. The terrain is 1,710 feet in this area. The air speed and altitude extremes and the hail and turbulence lasted from 30 seconds to one minute in the most critical portion of the cloud. It was impossible to hold a constant heading, consequently our heading varied from 000 to 090 degrees. As we broke out of the clouds we were climbing and on a 090 degree heading."

*A Passenger Says:* "Approximately 10-15 minutes east of Abilene the ceiling had lowered considerably but we were in good VFR weather. I was in the after part of the ship and could not see ahead but I noted that we entered a light rain. Almost immediately it felt as if the ship were flying apart and sounded like it when hail broke out the astro-dome and gun turret and pounded the wings and fuselage. Plexiglas and water flew into the ship and the co-pilot said that his windshield was ready to break out. The turbulence was terrific so I wedged myself in the after section of the plane facing the port side. Next thing I saw trees and the ground flashing by and we were in a dive of about 70 degrees from the vertical with a heavy list to port. I began yelling 'Pull up' and heard someone else say the same thing and before we did pull up we were down to around 50 feet or less from the ground."

*Other Crewmen say:* "All at once the plane was struck by hail and immediately we were on IFR flight conditions, and the plane lost about 1,000 feet immediately. The co-pilot's windshield was shattered in two places. The astro-dome and turret plexiglas gone. The two pilots immediately both flew the airplane. We were pitched around so violently that it required both pilots to hold the plane in some semblance of flying condition. Visibility was zero. We decided to go straight through. Radar reported clear about three miles straight ahead. As soon as we entered cloud we pulled back the throttle to about 25 inches because the air speed jumped to about 210, in the next instant it was about 80. We poured the power to it and hauled back on the yoke. We were thrown dangerously close to the deck. We kept the gyro-horizon on the miniature airplane centered and let the plane gain and lose a couple thousand feet at a time. Radar reported clear spot seemed to stay stationary. Finally broke into the clear again. During time of the hail it sounded like gun fire and I thought the engines were going to quit. Seemed like we were in the soup for about an hour. After breaking out we reported hail showers to Ft. Worth Radio. They sent a special on it, first hail reported in the area."

*Grampaw Pettibone Says:*

**"Honest, officer, I didn't start it. I was just sitting in the YMCA writing a letter home to my grandmother when this big lug crept up and slugged me!"**

**"Oh, Yeah", well next Sunday you fellows had better each put an extra dollar in the collection plate, and next time you see a line of thunderstorms ahead when on a VFR flight—go under, go over, or go around, but don't go through.**

## Hot On The Bottom

For a good many years I've been preaching that there are just three things you can do when an airplane catches on fire in flight—put the fire out, jump, or land *immediately*. Here's a recent case where the pilot chose the last alternative and did a mighty slick job of it.

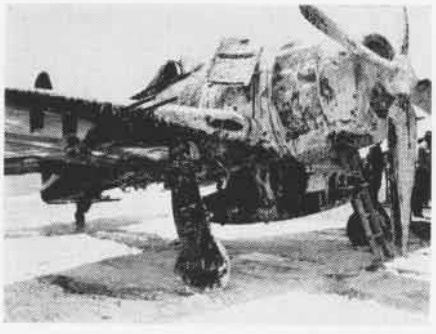
Shortly after take-off in an F8F-2, the pilot reduced power to 32 inches and 2200 RPM and started his climb-out over San Francisco Bay. The tower called him a moment later to report that the starboard landing gear had failed to retract. The pilot reduced speed and turned back towards the field while completing the procedure of raising the gear.

He had just succeeded in getting his gear up and was at an altitude of 2500 feet when he had a complete power failure. To complicate matters further, the cockpit filled with smoke and fumes.

The pilot quickly turned his oxygen regulator to the 100% position and headed towards the field for a dead stick landing. Although he could not see what was happening at this time, the aft underside of the fuselage of the F8F-2 was on fire. He gave three hard pulls on the release handle for his drop tank, but it refused to jettison.

Concentrating on reaching the field and making a good dead stick landing, the pilot could not tell how much of his plane was burning. Actually the fire was so severe that his luggage, which was stowed in the belly compartment could not be located after the accident. It was either entirely consumed by the fire or fell out when the bottom of the fuselage burned away.

Correctly judging that he would not make the field if he lowered his flaps, the pilot left them in the retracted position. He cut all switches and waited until he was certain of reaching the end of the runway before lowering his gear. The landing was good and the pilot hastily abandoned the plane at the completion of the roll out.



By this time the fire had burned itself out, but the pilot must have been surprised when he looked at the area back of the cockpit. The damage report states that 50 to 75 percent of the underside of the fuselage between the wheel wells and the tail wheel was completely burned away.

*Grampaw Pettibone Says:*

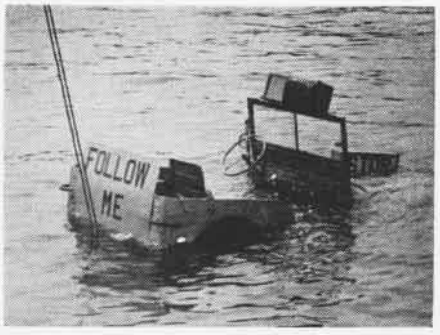
**Shades of Walter Mitty! I think this fellow should have assumed a nonchalant air when the fire truck arrived and said, "It's nothing much, fellows, I put it out myself."**

**He certainly did a swell job of handling an emergency fraught with many dangers. The plane is a strike, and in retrospect it looks like it would have been safer to bail out. However, the pilot was not in a position to see how much of his plane had burned away, and he took quick action to provide himself with plenty of oxygen.**

**The maintenance folks took the engine apart and found that all articulating rods and the master rod were sheared from the crankshaft. Two cylinders were split half way up the cylinder barrel and there was a good size hole in the main case. Oil flowing through this hole ignited and fed the fire until the engine oil was exhausted.**

**Initial engine damage may have occurred during starting. The plane had been on the ground for about two hours, and the prop was not pulled through prior to starting the engine.**

**The failure of the drop tank to jettison was caused by a loose clamp on the cable.**




## Fortunately the F6F Pilot Didn't Follow:

The driver of the "Follow Me" jeep pictured here had failed in three attempts to pass the examination for an operator's permit. His immediate superiors were aware of the fact that he had no operator's permit, but allowed him to operate the jeep due to a shortage of qualified drivers.

Shortly before this picture was taken, he cut in front of a taxiing F6F-5 without giving the pilot any warning signal. When he disappeared into the area of vision blocked by the engine, the pilot applied brakes and put the F6F on its nose.

The rocket tail on the starboard wing of the plane struck the rear of the jeep lightly. When the driver saw the impending collision he jumped from the jeep leaving it in gear. After a short driverless run, the jeep plunged through the cable barricade and into the bay.

*Grampaw Pettibone Says:*

**If this doesn't prove anything else, it at least shows that the folks giving the driver's tests knew what they were doing. The damage to the jeep was only $250, but a new prop for the F6F will cost about seven times that amount.**

**You'll be happy to know that this was one taxi accident in which no blame was assigned to the pilot.**

### Dismal Thought Dept.

If you're tempted to rely on the other pilot's navigation, remember:

(a) He may make a serious error.

(b) You may become separated.

(c) You may discover that he was depending on *you*.